PERIODICO EN ESPAÑOL ADENTRO

# CHALLENGE

FIGHT FOR COMMUNISM ★ LUCHE POR EL COMUNISMO ★ PLP

THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST NEWSPAPER OF PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY

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# WORKERS' CARAVAN HITS BOSSES' RACIST GENTRIFICATION

**INGLEWOOD, CA, February 28**— "No good landlords in a capitalist system!" This and other antiracist chants rang throughout neighborhoods here during a car caravan against racist gentrification and displacement of mainly Black and Latin residents.

Fighting for a communist world requires having confidence in, and relying on, the working class. It means developing collective planning, organization and discipline so that it becomes second nature to our members and our class. And, it means giving bold, communist, political leadership in the class struggle.

In a small way, the struggle by a local tenants' union and a non-profit organization to reclaim a house by and for an evicted family has become a political training ground for Progressive Labor Party (PLP) members and our fellow working class fighters.

## Racist gentrification attacks all workers

With the building of So-Fi, a brand new football stadium, and starting construction of an arena for the Los Angeles Clippers basketball team, the predominantly Black and Latin city of Inglewood has become a center of gentrification in the Los Angeles area. Since 2016, skyrocketing property values have led to huge rent increases that preceded a 2019 rent control law. Even with the law, the city administration's complete failure to enforce housing code regulations has continued to allow blood-sucking landlords to force tenants to move and then jack up rents.

Another aspect of racist gentrification has been the appearance of small-time crooks like Trojan Capital Investments, buying up "distressed" mortgages, evicting working-class homeowners and then selling to make a bundle on their blood money investments. The need for multiracial, working class unity in this city could not be more evident.

## Connecting past struggle to present

The caravan planning committee, made up mostly of young Latin members of the tenants' union, drew enthusiasm from a community-building workshop held the prior weekend. That event highlighted the historic role of the Communist Party-led Unemployed Councils, which led the 1930s Depression-era fight against evictions, houselessness, unemployment and racism.

That presentation, given by a PLP member, displayed pictures of the conditions faced by the working class, and how our class fought back then They highlighted the similarity of those conditions to

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# OUR FIGHT

☆Progressive Labor Party (PLP) fights to destroy capitalism and the dictatorship of the capitalist class. We organize workers, soldiers and youth into a revolutionary movement for communism.

☆The dictatorship of the working class — communism—can provide a lasting solution to the disaster that is today's world for billions of people. This cannot be done through electoral politics, but requires a revolutionary movement and a mass Red Army led by PLP.

☆Worldwide capitalism, in its relentless drive for profit, inevitably leads to war, fascism, poverty, disease, starvation and environmental destruction. The capitalist class, through its state power — governments, armies, police, schools and culture — maintains a dictatorship over the world's workers. The capitalist dictatorship supports, and is supported by, the anti-working-class ideologies of racism, sexism, nationalism, individualism and religion.

☆While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim "communism is dead," capitalism is the real failure for billions worldwide. Capitalism returned to Russia and China because socialism retained many aspects of the profit system, like wages and privileges. Russia and China did not establish communism.

☆Communism means working collectively to build a worker-run society. We will abolish work for wages, money and profits. While capitalism needs unemployment, communism needs everyone to contribute and share in society's benefits and burdens.

☆Communism means abolishing racism and the concept of "race." Capitalism uses racism to super-exploit Black, Latin, Asian and indigenous workers, and to divide the entire working class.

☆Communism means abolishing the special oppression of women— sexism—and divisive gender roles created by the class society.

☆Communism means abolishing nations and nationalism. One international working class, one world, one Party.

☆Communism means that the minds of millions of workers must become free from religion's false promises, unscientific thinking and poisonous ideology. Communism will triumph when the masses of workers can use the science of dialectical materialism to understand, analyze and change the world to meet their needs and aspirations.

☆Communism means the Party leads every aspect of society. For this to work, millions of workers — eventually everyone — must become communist organizers. Join Us!

## CONTACT US

**Email**
desafio.challenge@gmail.com
**Mail**
Box 808 GPO, Brooklyn, NY 11202
**Internet**
www.plp.org
Twitter, Facebook, Instagram:
@PLPchallenge

### WHO WRITES FOR CHALLENGE?

CHALLENGE is for the working class, produced by the working class. The fact that CHALLENGE/PLP articles are not signed grows from PLP's criticism of the cult of the individual in the former socialist Soviet Union and China. We do not want to encourage the possibility of building up a "following" around any particular individual.

While an article may be written by one person, the final version is based on collective discussion and criticism. Many times this collective discussion even precedes an individual's writing of an article.

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Editorial

# Texas power outage: Death by capitalism

The ongoing fallout from the Texas power collapse, in the wake of the January 6 Capitol insurrection and the grim milestone of 500,000 lives lost to the coronavirus pandemic, shows the world that the rot of U.S. capitalism extends to infrastructure, liberal democracy, and health care. Devastated parents found a perfectly healthy 11-year-old boy frozen to death overnight in his bed (Houston Chronicle, 2/18). He died because the depraved power bosses value maximum profit over the most basic human needs of the working class.

For workers in and around the Gulf Coast, the bosses' callous negligence led to massive misery and untold dozens of deaths. As many as 17 million workers lived under "boil water" orders in Texas alone. Half a million remain without water as we go to press, three weeks after a winter storm broke the state's fragile electrical power grid (CNN, 3/1). Facing the rising global power of China, the U.S. rulers have a big problem. U.S. workers will be less than eager to fight and die for a ruling class that cannot provide drinking water or heat in brutal winters. Capitalism can't be "regulated" into serving workers' needs. As U.S. capitalism lurches from one unprecedented crisis to the next, we must see the bosses' reform efforts for what they are: fascist preparations for wider war.

The Texas power disaster is above all a lesson in the anarchy and cruelty that lie at the core of capitalism. Because the bosses are driven to gain profit every step of the way, from energy resource extraction to power generation to its delivery to people's homes, the grid is drained of the capacity to deliver electricity when and where it is most needed.

### Domestic energy: backbone of small fascism

The power collapse reflects a widening split within the U.S. ruling class. The Texas energy model is essentially unregulated, a capitalist "free market" in all its glory. Independent Texas power arrangements date back over a century. They were a move by domestic energy producers to escape federal regulations and taxes that benefit multinational finance capital, the Big Fascist wing of the U.S. ruling class now fronted by Joe Biden and Kamala Harris.

The openly racist Small Fascists, like the Republicans who run Texas, are desperate for maximum short-term profits. They have no interest in contributing more of their spoils in taxes to maintain the far-flung and floundering U.S. empire. The Big Fascists need a more reliable infrastructure and more "sacrifice"—most of all from their fellow capitalists—to prepare for war with China. That translates to more regulation and higher rates of corporate taxation. Beyond funding for war, the finance capitalist liberals know they need to provide at least a minimum standard of living to give workers a society that seems worth fighting and dying for.

### Big fascism: still the main danger

After Donald Trump's unlikely rise to the White House, a taste of presidential power has motivated the Small Fascists to stay on the offensive. Their defiance of the liberal bosses exposes the weakness of the main wing's ability to discipline its own class. The Small Fascists kicked off 2021 with a failed coup that was cheered on by Trump, who still refuses to accept his loss to Biden at the polls. To date, they've had zero price to pay. At the February 28 convention of the Conservative Political Action Conference, Trump flaunted his gutter racist movement's tenacity: "We're not starting new parties. We have the Republican Party" (CPAC Convention, 2/28).

The liberal Big Fascists are faced with mounting challenges to stay in control in their own backyard while fending off rivals like China and Russia. At stake are the long-term needs of U.S. imperialism. Meanwhile, the underfunded U.S. infrastructure is falling down around their ears. The latest power grid failure, along with raging wildfires in California and roving blackouts across the country, is in line with a 2017 warning from the American Society of Civil Engineers. It gave the nation's infrastructure a "D+," meaning that conditions were "mostly below standard," exhibiting "significant deterioration," with a "strong risk of failure" (Council on Foreign Relations, September, 2020).

The Big Fascists' big plans are currently stuck in neutral. Though the Democrats control the White House and both houses of Congress, they're struggling to enact relatively modest efforts to shore up working-class loyalty to U.S. capitalism. A $15 minimum wage, student loan forgiveness, and stimulus checks are all currently on hold. Sooner or later, the only option left for the liberal imperialists will be to move toward open fascism, both to smash their Small Fascist rivals and attempt to control an angry working class. Growing calls from House Democrats to "deplatform" Fox News for its sins of building the Trump phenomenon (politico.com, 2/22,) must be understood in this light.

In imposing their final solution—fascism—the liberal rulers are playing catch-up with more unified ruling classes, like China's, who wield tighter control over state power and infrastructure.

Illusions about the U.S. decline lead some workers to ask "how in this country" could we have older people and children dying in bed from the cold. But this kind of atrocity is what U.S.-led capitalism has imposed internationally since it became the top superpower after World War II. It's just a hint of the ruthlessness to come. The global war U.S. imperialism is now planning will wipe out populations. It will devastate the natural environment. It will make today's atrocities pale by comparison.

### Capitalism = profit over workers
### Communism = abolition of profit

Communist revolution is the one and only force in history ever to stop the imperialists in their tracks. The towering achievements of Soviet and Chinese workers in turning imperialist war into communist revolution are still the wind in our sails. True, those achievements have been reversed by a resurgence of the profit system. The brave victory of Vietnamese workers over the U.S. imperialist war machine in the 1970s did not produce a communist Vietnam. But it once again proved the power of communist-led workers to defeat imperialism.

As to picking up the pieces to build a world where workers don't die in their beds, we communists are supremely confident. Once we smash the dictatorship of the liberal capitalist bosses, a working-class dictatorship can fix problems that today are unsolvable. We'll succeed where the bosses have failed because we'll abolish profit as the driving force behind every economic and political decision.

The racist, sexist profit system gives workers terrible choices, regardless of whether Republicans or Democrats are in charge. Workers can freeze to death in Texas ice storms, burn to death in California wildfires, die in secret in a New York nursing home, or be slaughtered by a rain of U.S. missiles in Syria. Only communism can abolish the murderous chaos that's engineered by capitalism. Our liberation lies in discarding fascists both large and small, to create a world run by and for workers. Fight for communism! Join Progressive Labor Party! ✪

# Transit workers expose cheating CTA, deserve a worker-run system

STOP LYING AND DECIEVING THE MEMBERSHIP
UNION BOSS KEITH HILL PROUDLY PUSHES CTA PLANTATION POLICIES
Our Work is Essential but our Lives are not ?!
STOP Violating The Members Rights!
DORVAL CARTER-- WHERE'S MY HAZARD PAY??
THE MEMBERSHIP DEMAND UNION MEETING! VIRTUAL
cta Red Line

**CHICAGO, February 23**—Members of Progressive Labor Party (PLP) joined with Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) workers for a multiracial "Hour of Power" rally today at the 95 Street transit station to protest the sellout union leaders. These misleaders work hand in hand with the transit bosses, helping them stay in control. Transit, when run in the interest of profit, can never function to sustain the working-class necessities. PLP members call for communism, working-class power, where transit workers will not only keep move the city but also steer the world.

Commuters and drivers passing by honked their horns in support while we held signs and picketed the bus/rail terminal, denouncing the union misleaders. Workers from Locals 241 and 308 who drive the buses and the trains in Chicago are spreading the word on how they have been shut out of negotiations for a new contract with the city.

Speakers on the bullhorn demanded hazard pay, sanitized facilities and vehicles, two-person crews, more full-time jobs and job security, paid sick time for all employees, and member control of their unions. These demands are ripe for struggle class where workers and communists can push the limits of these reforms to fight the whole system.

Workers were receptive to PLP members who distributed 50 copies of CHALLENGE while helping lead chants against racism, for worker unity, and for communist revolution.

Under capitalism, especially one in decline like the U.S.'s, public transit operations are chronically underfunded to the point of physical collapse. They routinely put workers in mortal danger. Their role is to shuttle us to and from our jobs in order to make profits for this racist profit system.

Communist control of transportation means always having the proper resources and safety protocols in place to protect our class. Smashing the bosses' state dictatorship and erecting a working-class dictatorship through an international PLP is the only route that will guarantee safe mass transit.

## CTA and union attack Workers unite, fight back

CTA is the second largest transit system in the country, and has a mostly Black workforce. Whenever there are contract negotiations, the bosses attack the workers in an effort to keep wages down and to try to turn public sentiment against them. By failing to address dangers during the pandemic, the racist CTA bosses and their union hacks are responsible for at least eight deaths and 900 workers having contracted the Covid-19 virus (Chicago Sun-Times, 12/20/20).

The union misleadership has worked for decades to alienate transit workers from meetings and contract discussions. Although boasting 3,000 members, it is rare to have 50 workers attend a general meeting. Now, in a period of virtual calls, worker input about job conditions has become even more limited.

In spite of these attempts to shut them out, workers have bravely pushed back against the racist working conditions. Many have organized meetings to address concerns, defying CTA and the union's attempts to retaliate against them for doing so (see CHALLENGE letters, 4/16/20). PLP have supported these efforts to build multiracial, rank-and-file solidarity as the way for our class to grasp our potential power outside the limits of the bosses' institutions.

## A route to workers' power

The power of a militant and united transit workforce can hardly be understated. If more workers were to reject both the bosses and their collaborating unions and organize on behalf of our class interest, we could shut both the rails and the roads down and bring the capitalist system to its knees. As conditions become evermore untenable and communist ideas grip our class, this level of class struggle will rise again.

But in PLP, we're not just about shutting the profit system down; we're about wiping it out entirely. A worker-run communist society would make our class's needs as the determining factor of all decisions. With that, we will rebuild and expand mass transit in a way that meets our collective needs and that operates in the most environmentally healthy ways possible.

The finance capital wing of the U.S. ruling class is more and more worried about their worldwide imperialist empire. Represented by President Joe Biden, they are ramping up their calls to rebuild a failing U.S. infrastructure (see editorial, page 2), but only to better prepare their country and the working class for future imperialist war.

PLP calls on workers to reject both wings of the U.S. bosses and fight for a future where our power and safety always comes first. That's communism. Join us!✪

PLP and friends gathered virtually for our annual *Black and Red Celebration*, giving tribute to the leadership of Black communists. CHALLENGE readers are invited to view the event online at www.tinyurl.com/redandblack2021

# Biden's bombs kill workers and increase Middle East chaos

On February 25 U.S. President Joe Biden bombed Syria taking only 36 days to join the list of U.S. Presidents whose blood-soaked hands have killed workers across the Middle East. The airstrike on a base in Syria used by an Iranian backed militia to launch rocket attacks against U.S. forces in Iraq came out of the increasing weakness of the U.S. ruling class. Across the Middle East the U.S. bosses are in retreat. The latest bombings, which killed at least 17 people and wounded dozens more (NY Times, 2/26), highlights how, as the U.S. ruling class grows weaker, direct war between the imperialists becomes more and more likely.

This latest bombing, like all the wars between the capitalists, was an example of workers killing workers. The bosses continually pit us against our sisters and brothers in the working class. The bosses use racism and nationalism to turn us against each other. Workers in one country are ordered to kill workers in another. Whether we live in the U.S., Iran, Syria or anywhere else, we have to reject siding with any bosses. Our task is to build internationalism among the workers of the world as one class united. The future for the working class lies in turning the bosses' war into a class war against the bosses for communist revolution and building a society that serves the needs of the international working class.

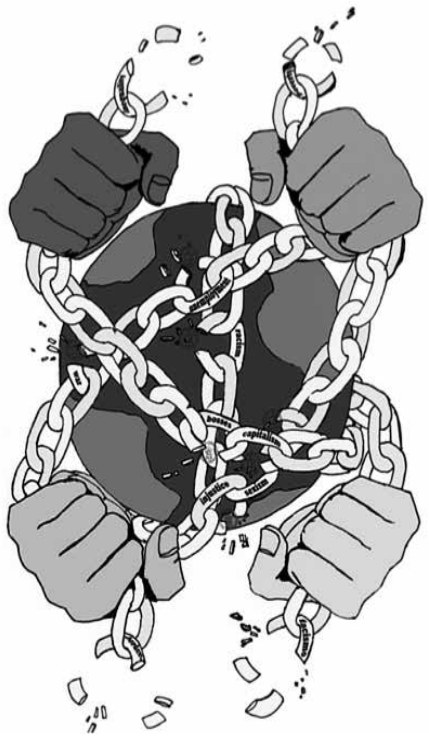
## U.S. bosses are no longer calling the shots in the Middle East

Biden dropped the bombs out of weakness. Over the last 10 years the U.S. has been losing in the Middle East. The U.S. military was forced out of Iraq and is on the verge of leaving Afghanistan, which would give the Taliban nearly complete control of that country. Then, just this week, Biden declared the U.S. was not in a position to punish Saudi Arabian ruler Prince Mohammed bin Salman for killing the U.S. reporter Jamal Khashoggi, who was dismembered on the orders of the Prince (The Hill, 2/27).

Biden and company are trying to portray themselves as somehow being in control of the back and forth between the U.S. war machine and the Iranian backed militias. Nothing could be further from the truth. The U.S. bosses have no more ability to control the tides of war rumbling across the globe than they could control the spread of Covid-19. Capitalism can only go from crisis and war to crisis and war leaving a trail of destruction in its wake.

## Volatility in the Middle East increases as U.S. bosses position weakens

For the last 60 years, since the 1958 Marine invasion of Lebanon, post World War II (WWII) U.S.



ruling class strategy has revolved around military control of the Middle East. For the last 30 years the U.S. has been in almost continual war in Iraq and going on 20 years now in Afghanistan, wars the U.S. bosses have lost (Brooking Institute, 7/27/20). In this period the U.S. ruling class has gone from a growing dominant imperialist power to a declining empire being challenged in every corner of the globe it once dominated.

Prior to losing in Iraq and Afghanistan the U.S. bosses, backed by their gigantic military, controlled the region. That is no longer the situation and has created a free for all between the various ruling classes trying to take control. The increasing volatility driven by the decline of the U.S. empire and the rise of competing capitalists has created an extremely unpredictable and volatile situation.

As the U.S. ruling class has weakened, Iran and Russia are asserting themselves across the Middle East. Biden is faced with trying to reinstall U.S. power. This latest rain of death was the U.S. bosses trying to contain the Iranian bosses who have taken advantage of the U.S. defeat in Iraq to become the largest power there, with Turkey and Syria also vying for control (Middle East Institute, 3/12/20).

## Specifics are unpredictable, big picture is clear

The specifics of how all this will play out are hard to predict. The U.S. ruling class is being challenged by Russia and Iran in the Middle East and by China in virtually every other corner of the globe, including Latin America, the U.S. bosses' backyard. Other ruling classes, like Turkey, seeing the upheaval are taking their own shots at asserting power. That's a lot of bombs and tanks and fighter jets scrambling to grab pieces of the world.

What is clear is that big wars are on the horizon and the bosses of all these countries are planning to use the working class to fight and die in them. World War I (WWI) and WWII were both driven by the desperation of capitalism in crisis (Internationalism). Millions of workers were killed by the bosses' bombs. At the same time the communist movement united workers in the midst of capitalist war and when the smoke cleared the working class had fought to victory for our class. In Russia during WWI and in China during WWII the working class under the leadership of the communist movement built internationalism and turned the bosses' wars into revolution for workers power. Our hope for the future depends on building the PLP and the communist movement today.✪

### Infrastructure of imperialism

If the working class can be won politically to fight a major war, then arms production and delivery are key. Domestic infrastructure has always been key to war fighting from advantage.

In 1860 the U.S. The North enjoyed an advantage over the Southern Confederacy in railroad miles. The AutoBahn system built by the German ruling class was a major 1930s infrastructure project which laid the basis for the Nazi army's capacity to wage war to the east in Poland in 1939, to its west in 1940, and back to the east again against the USSR in 1941.

Calls by president Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris for infrastructure development serve both purposes in an era of intensifying inter-imperialist rivalry with China (see editorial, page 2). Biden pitched Congress an economic recovery package that includes huge investments in infrastructure, job creation, and manufacturing as a bulwark against Chinese advances in transportation and technology.

> *China is leveraging military modernization, influence operations, and predatory economics to coerce neighboring countries to reorder the Indo-Pacific region to their advantage. As China continues its economic and military ascendance, asserting power through an all-of-nation long-term strategy, it will continue to pursue a military modernization program that seeks Indo-Pacific regional hegemony in the near-term and displacement of the United States to achieve global preeminence in the future. (2018 National Defense Strategy).*

# Workers' caravan hits bosses' racist gentrification

Continued from page 1

present-day hunger, houselessness, unemployment, looming evictions and police terror. The speaker also underlined the communist-led, anti-racist, multi-racial unity of those past struggles. Though that communist-led movement won some reforms, it failed to overthrow the entire capitalist system with revolution. But it's capitalism that is the cause of the evils our class faced then and still faces now. The whole damn capitalist system has to go.

Almost 50 people in 35 cars participated in the caravan, part of an escalating campaign to force Trojan to return the house to the family at a reasonable price. We also brought the message of tenant/homeowner unity to help energize our class brothers and sisters in the fight against gentrification. The campaign organizers had previously canvassed the surrounding neighborhoods. Workers responded enthusiastically to our signs and message, taking literature, raising their fists and even joining our militant chants. The caravan ended at an apartment complex directly across from SoFi. One of the tenants at the complex spoke and exposed the lousy, mold-ridden conditions that the landlord there refuses to repair.

From the chants to the warm solidarity shown to the tenant and homeowner speakers, the energy and spirit of the young people who organized the caravan was on full display. One speaker attacked the role of local poli-tricksters in promoting racist gentrification, and vowed to keep up the fight to defeat this scourge to the working class. Another called for ridding the world of a system where housing remains a commodity. All of the speakers have been working closely with members of PLP on this campaign. They have been extremely open to our call for revolution.

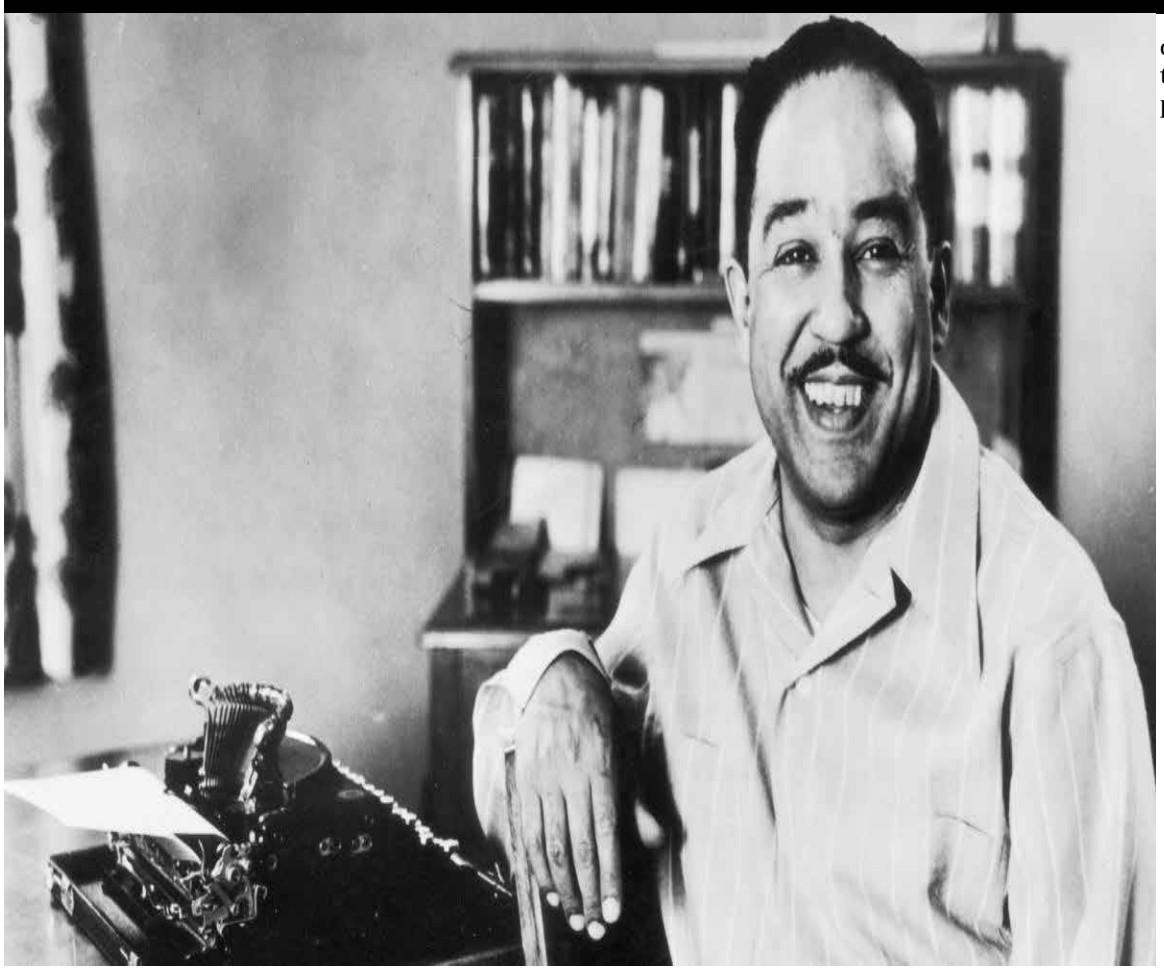
## Communists will lead the working class to victory

Going forward, we have great opportunities to build our Party. About 25 people at the caravan took the latest copy of CHALLENGE. The campaign to reclaim the family's home will continue. Mass evictions, temporarily put on hold by the bosses' phony state "moratoriums", will inevitably raise their ugly head again.

Meanwhile, inter-imperialist rivalry between U.S. and Chinese bosses will lead to world war. These cataclysms will require a mass response from the working class, led by our Party, taking inspiration and learning from both the strengths and the weaknesses of our predecessors in the old communist Party-led movement.

The "hard knocks" experiences of the working class will validate the slogan that "the only solution is communist revolution." Through the small struggles of today, we are training ourselves and the working class how to seize and hold power, and build a world where decent housing and everything else, which workers will collectively produce, will be shared according to need.✪

# 1930s: Langston Hughes, major poet of the communist movement



*The previous issue of CHALLENGE (3/3) remembered Langston Hughes as a writer sharply critical of Jim Crow segregation during World War II and as a poet for the U.S. working class—particularly Black workers. Now we'll flash back to the 1920s and 1930s, the period when Hughes became an advocate for multiracial, anti-capitalist revolution.*

A tradition of antiracist fightback ran deep in Hughes's family history. In 1858, his maternal grandmother, Mary Langston, married Lewis Leary, an abolitionist who died in John Brown's 1859 raid in Harper's Ferry. Her second husband, Charles Howard Langston, was an educator and ardent abolitionist.

## Hughes's influences

According to his biographer Arnold Rampersad, young Langston Hughes was influenced by the poetry of Walt Whitman, Carl Sandburg, Paul Laurence Dunbar, and Claude McKay, along with the work of W.E.B. Du Bois, the antiracist, pro-communist writer and historian. In June 1921, Hughes' poetry was published for the first time in a professional journal. "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" came out in *The Crisis*, the journal of the NAACP.

In September 1921, Hughes moved to New York to attend Columbia University. Not yet ready for college, he withdrew before the year was out. He plunged into Black cosmopolitan New York and met Du Bois and Jessie Fauset, both writers at *The Crisis*, and the poet Countee Collins. By 1924, after a journey to West Africa and Paris and an extended sojourn in Washington, DC, he'd become a leading light of the Harlem Renaissance. In March 1925, a landmark issue of *Survey Graphic*, "Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro" (edited by Alain Locke), contained 10 poems by Hughes, including: "I, too, sing America./I am the darker brother. . . ."

In 1926, Hughes published his first volume of poems, *The Weary Blues,* and a famous essay for *The Nation* (June 23, 1926). In "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," Hughes wasn't yet ready to attack capitalism or embrace the need for militant, collective antiracism. Instead, he argued for the importance of Black identity and called for racial pride: "Why should I want to be white? I am Negro—and beautiful."

By the late 1920s, when Hughes was enrolled at Lincoln University, a historically Black institution outside Philadelphia, he was meeting communists as well as Harlem's cultural leaders. In December 1926, four of his poems were published in the communist monthly New Masses, though they were nowhere near as politically sharp as his work to come.

With the Great Depression, beginning in November 1929, communists took leadership positions in major labor unions. They had an explanation for the Depression and a solution for racist inequalities and capitalist exploitation. They called for multiracial unity and revolution. Hughes was drawn to these ideas in *New Masses,* and he put his art at the service of revolution.

## The Scottsboro Boys

For Hughes and millions of others, a political turning point came on March 25, 1931, when nine young Black teenagers were falsely accused of raping two white young women in a railroad boxcar in Alabama. The arrest and trial of the Scottsboro Boys galvanized communists and antiracists throughout the world. Eight of the teenagers were quickly tried by the racists and sentenced to death; a mistrial was declared for the ninth because he was underage. The Communist Party USA sent in lawyers to challenge the case. The Supreme Court overturned the convictions; one of the women recanted her accusations and even went on tour to defend the defendants. Yet they languished in jail, many of them for decades.

Hughes responded with a terse four-line poem, "Justice," for New Masses (July 1931), which accompanied a drawing of a lynching by artist Phil Bard.

*That Justice is a blind goddess*
*Is a thing to which we poor are wise:*
*Her bandage hides two festering sores*
*That once, perhaps, were eyes.*

For the November 1931 *New Masses,* Hughes wrote "Scottsboro, Limited: A One Act Play." The cast roster includes "Red Voices," who counter racist "Mob Voices" and shout out: "We'll fight! The Communists will fight for you./ not just black—but black and white." At the end of the play, the "Red Voices" declare: "Rise from the dead, workers, and fight!" For the finale, Hughes directs that "Here the Internationale may be sung and the red flag raised above the heads of the black and white workers together."

To Hughes and others in the communist movement, the trial of the Scottsboro Boys was both the cutting-edge antiracist fight of the day and a huge opportunity to unite Black and white workers. For the June 1932 issue of *New Masses*, Hughes wrote the poem "An Open Letter to the South."

*White workers of the South: . . .*
*I am the black worker.*
*Listen:*
*That the land might be ours,*
*And the mines and the factories and the office towers*
*At Harlem, Richmond, Gastonia, Atlanta, New Orleans;*
*That the plants and the roads and the tools of power*
*Be ours*
*…*
*Let us become instead, you and I,*
*One single hand*
*That can united rise*
*To smash the old dead dogmas of the past—*
*To kill the lies of color*
*That keep the rich enthroned*
*. . .*
*Let us get together, say:*
*"You are my brother, black or white.*
*You my sister—now—today!"*
*. . .*
*We did not know that we were brothers.*
*Now we know!*
*Out of that brotherhood*
*Let power grow!*
*We did not know*
*That we were strong.*
*Now we see*
*In union lies our strength.*
*. . .*
*White worker,*
*Here is my hand.*
*Today,*
*We're Man to Man.*

## Good Morning, Revolution

As Hughes wrote the poem, in the spring of 1932, he was preparing to join a group of 22 writers, journalists, and actors to travel through the Soviet Union. He mailed back from the USSR to New Masses his rousing poem "Good Morning Revolution," which was excerpted in the last issue of CHALLENGE. After writing a number of commissioned pieces for Soviet journals and a short book, *A Negro Looks at Soviet Central Asia,* Hughes returned to the U.S. in the summer of 1933. It was a pivotal period in U.S. politics, when communists played a big role in the fight against rising fascism, both in Europe and inside the U.S.

For the remainder of the 1930s, Hughes continued writing his radical poetry. He also traveled to Spain to report on the Spanish Civil War—the topic of our next CHALLENGE article.

The work of Hughes shows that a capitalist understanding of art as being from and for the individual is used to divorce workers from the material world. Hughes is an example that art from and for the working class can advance our fightback. Let's celebrate Langston Hughes as part of our communist legacy. His antiracist work and writing gave us a model for working-class unity and revolutionary optimism. ✪

*Biographical information is drawn from Arnold Rampersad, The Life of Langston Hughes, 2 vols. 2nd edition. New York: Oxford, 2002; and Arnold Rampersad, ed. The Collected Works of Langston Hughes, 3 vols. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2001.*

# LETTERS

***We encourage all CHALLENGE readers to send in letters and articles about their experiences fighting the bosses worldwide.***

## Meisha Porter, new face of liberal racism

Bad News! Meisha Porter has been appointed as the first Black woman to lead as NYC's chancellor of the country's largest public school system, effectively becoming the new face of liberal racism.

While Porter has been promoted as an antiracist Black woman leader, and champion for "equitable schools," her history proves otherwise.

Three years ago, she was the Superintendent of District 11 in the Bronx. This is the same district where my child previously attended a New York City Public school. This community, composed mainly of working-class Black, Latin, and Caribbean families, has always been terrorized by racist cops and decaying schools. This is also the same neighborhood where racist cop Richard Haste murdered 18-year-old Ramarley Graham for existing while Black.

Three years ago, a white teacher, and known Trump supporter, committed an openly racist act against two Black teachers. During a small after-school training, he made a noose in front of the teachers.

Knowing this teacher wanted to make his racism clear to everyone, the two teachers immediately filed a complaint. The next day, antiracist members from the community distributed a flyer within the neighborhood and in front of the school. The leaflet displayed a photo of the racist teacher and demanded he be fired.

One of the women who was targeted had asked for the racist to be reassigned until an investigation was complete. However, instead of firing the teacher, Porter allowed the racist to continue teaching while she conducted a perfunctory investigation.

To seem as if she addressed the racism, she mandated that school staff attend "anti-bias" trainings. The racist got off scot-free! Although the leaflet from the community was a good start, Porter managed to keep the press away, and pacify any other form of fightback from parents, students, and teachers. To this day, the racist teacher continues to teach at the same school.

There have been many liberal misleaders claiming to fight for "equitable schools" throughout New York City and do nothing but pacify workers and students from fighting back. It came as no surprise that Meisha Porter did nothing to discipline this teacher and set an example for other racists to see.

Black capitalist ideas, promotion of identity politics, and provoking racist division among workers are trending in an era of U.S. capitalism in decline. Porter is part of this latest trend of patriotism, which gets workers to accept U.S. racism as part of "who we are" as long as Black and Latin workers get a seat at the table of rulers and wannabe oppressors.

PLP rejects, not makes amends with, racism. Only communism gives us a vision of how racism can be defeated; we will abolish profit and exploitation, the material basis for racist divisions.

In this public school system, communist presence inside the fight to remove metal detectors is the real good news, not the changing of this boss for that one at the top.

★★★★★

## I'm no scientist…I am a communist

I am no scientist. But what I know of climate change I get from the media and what I know to be indisputably true; capitalist society throughout the world is inclined to make profits at all cost. This drive for profits has no regard for the well-being of the planet, let alone the working class who produce all, but do not control the instruments of labor.

I am no scientist. But does it take a scientist to see the effects of Climate Change: the increase in number and intensity of hurricanes, tornadoes, droughts, winter storms, etc. Can capitalist society with its "coercive law of competition" stem the tide it created?

I am no scientist. But I do know this: when the electricity goes out those who suffer the most are the working class, employed or unemployed. Those who suffer the most are the bearers of the racist attacks who are used to increase the profits of the capitalist class, dividing us into smaller controllable units and weakening our ability to stand together and fight back.

I am no scientist. But when a winter storm recently hit our community and the electricity went out, I made a discovery. The temperature dropped and we endured. Those of us who could relied on bottled water to survive, creek water to flush our toilets, propane stoves to cook. We slept in our winter clothing and waited. Time slowed down as the hours turned to days.

I am no scientist. But it seems to me that if you can land a rover on Mars, you should be able to keep the electricity flowing. What daunts me is where is the profit of a rover on Mars? And yet I know there must be or the investment necessary wouldn't have been made.

I am no scientist. But I heard and read recently that the infrastructure of electrical cables and grids are in disrepair, that the maintenance of this infrastructure is necessary and costly. The investment has not been made in years. Profits over human lives is the priority.

I am no scientist. But I hope this letter provides some warmth in the knowledge that a day will come when we live in a society where humanity, not profits, is the priority. Long Live Communism! Power to the Working Class!

★★★★★

# Glossary communist political terms

### Fascism

Capitalism's response to a crisis of their system, when the bosses can no longer sustain the charade of liberal democracy and resort to more direct control and state terror instead. Fascism is marked by the ruling capitalists disciplining their own ranks to serve the urgent needs of the capitalist state and weather the crisis. To defend their system from internal and external threats, they use all the means available in their state apparatus, including violence. To build unity within their class and loyalty from workers, they rely on nationalist politics and calls for sacrifice. Their strategy is to mislead the working class to kill our working class sisters and brothers in the next inter-imperialist war.

### Big Fascists

The Big Fascists are the dominant finance capitalist faction of the U.S. ruling class. They represent the wealthiest and most powerful bosses in the U.S., including multinational banks like Chase and Citibank, multinational oil companies like ExxonMobil, the big automakers, Boeing, Amazon, and the major media companies. As the dominant grouping since World War II, the Big Fascists were the architects of the liberal world order with the U.S. bosses on top. Their dominance rests on U.S. financial and military power and its strategic control of the Middle East and the flow of oil to Europe, Asia, and Africa. To sustain this dominance, they need to rebuild a huge, multiracial military for inter-imperialist war, most likely with China.

### Small Fascists

The Small Fascists are a group of domestically oriented U.S. capitalists who are challenging the Big Fascists over the direction of U.S. imperialism. Since their interests are less tied to controlling the flow of oil, they are against heavy taxation to keep troops in the Middle East and in general oppose costly military bases and invasions. They're willing to rely on a smaller, whiter army, backed by nuclear weapons and the Air Force. They have used open racism to build a political following.

# Rest in Power, Elizam Escobar

*On January 15, 2021, Elizam Escobar passed away, a former member of the Liga Socialista Puertorriqueña and of the Progresive Labor Party (PLP). Elizam was a great cartoonist and artist whose political commitment was expressed through his art work in CHALLENGE during the early 1970s. They are of lasting value and a tribute to the communist spirit he showed during those years. We have reproduced one of them here* (see cartoon).

*Unfortunately, Elizam quit PLP and joined the terrorist FALN independence group. He was arrested in 1980 and spent almost 20 years in prison for planning terrorist acts to gain Puerto Rican independence. After his release he became a well-known art teacher in Puerto Rico.*

*A friend remembers him this way:*

Elizam and I were roommates for a number of years. I still remember us attending the Saturday morning rallies in New York's Upper West Side, selling CHALLENGE, the PLP revolutionary communist newspaper. Back then, we were arrested several times. I remember one particular occasion when the New York Police Department police beat the (crap) out of us - they thought that they could beat us into submission, but our fighting communist spirit was greater! We were placed in two separate cells next to one another.

We were trying to keep our spirits lifted so we started to sing from the TOP OF OUR LUNGS protest songs in Spanish and English. This pissed off New York's "finest" to say the least! We sang "Bella Ciao", the "International" and "Mírala que Linda viene la revolución obrera que no da ni un paso atrás!" This infuriated the NYPD and they handcuffed us to the cell bars and beat and pepper sprayed us again!

This is the spirit that I remember of Elizam, bold and militant, a true comrade , fighter and communist who was always ready for combat! Throughout the struggle in our cells we never stopped singing!

Thanks to Elizam, I met Juan Antonio Corretjer, general secretary of the Puerto Rican Socialist League, fraternal organization of PLP. We both joined PLP in 1971.

Elizam was arrested April 4, 1980 for seditious conspiracy as a member of Las Fuerzas Armada de Liberación Nacional (FALN) and sentenced to 68 years in prison. Elizam served 19 years and 6 months in state and federal prisons. In 1999 he and 10 other combatants of the FALN had their sentence commuted and he served an additional five years on probation in Puerto Rico .

We can still hear on the PLP-LP Elizam singing loud and proud: "Bella Ciao, Bella Ciao, Bella Ciao, Ciao,Ciao!"

Long live Communism! La clase obrera no tiene frontera! (The working class has no borders!)

# Book Review

# "Agent Sonya," Heroic Communist

In Agent Sonya: Moscow's Most Daring Wartime Spy (2020), Ben Macintyre describes the evolution of Ursula Kuczynski, from an incipient revolutionary into a career of one of the most successful Soviet spies before, during, and after World War II.

### Time of great conflict & revolution

Between two world wars, fascism was on the rise throughout Europe and Asia. Germany was roiling with street battles between fascists, the German Communist Party, and the Social Democratic Party.

A wide gulf existed between the ultra-rich and everyone else. The Weimar Republic, 1919-1933, was characterized by mass unemployment, economic insecurity, and savage political conflict. In one year alone, 1918-1919, roughly 900,000 Germans died of hunger. In 1920, the Nazi Party was founded. A year later Adolf Hitler became its leader. On January 1, 1919, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht founded the German Communist Party but were captured and assassinated by right-wing German army officers, possibly sanctioned by leaders of the anti-communist Social Democratic Party.

In July, 1921 the Chinese Communist Party was organized in Shanghai. In 1927 a leader of the Nationalist Party, the Kuomintang (KMT), Chiang Kai-shek, broke with the communists. In one day, on April 12, 1927, KMT military forces allied with local criminal gangs, killed 5,000 - 10,000 students and workers loyal to the communists.

The capitalist world after World War I, from Europe to Japan, was dominated by militarists, fascist heads of state, and their financial backers, all of whom espoused various forms of racism, anti-Semitism, xenophobia, jingoism, militarism, and imperial conquest.

The critical difference between the 1920s-'30s in Europe and today was the existence of an international communist movement. The result of the Bolshevik revolution in November, 1917, was that the working class, led by the Bolshevik (communist) Party,, held sway in the largest country in the world. And the Bolshevik's goal was to create an anti-racist society of equality rather than one based on private property and profit

During the 1920s and early 1930s revolutionary communist movements in Germany, Hungary,

Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, and China were battling the fascists for state power. The Comintern and the Soviet Union gave material and ideological support to these struggles.

### Ursula Kuczynski

Into this political and social cauldron, Ursula Kuczynski was born in 1907 to a middle-class Jewish family in Berlin. When she was sixteen she was beaten by the police in Berlin during a May Day demonstration, learning a lesson she would never forget: politics is at bottom a power struggle, most often decided by mortal combat.

Ursula Kuczynski was a professional spy who ran agents and networks against the fascists in her own country, in Japanese-occupied China, in Poland, Switzerland, and then, during the Cold War period, in Great Britain. She eventually became a Red Army colonel and, among her other espionage successes, ran Klaus Fuchs, the German physicist who enabled the USSR to get the atomic bomb, thus breaking the American monopoly on atomic weaponry.

After the Second World War she continued to spy for Moscow. Often suspected, she was never caught. In 1943 the Director of Soviet intelligence said this about her: "If we had five Sonyas in England, the war would be over sooner."

### Forever a communist

She died in Germany on July 7, 2000, age ninety-three. Her son, Peter, summed up his mother's long life this way: "There were two important things to her, her children and the communist cause."

Urusla Kuczynski was also called Ruth Werner, Ursula Beurton, Mrs. Burton, and Ursula Hamburger, but her most enduring name, her spy name, was Sonya.

The book Agent Sonya is fascinating because it contextualizes how from the 1920s to her death nearly eighty years later, a young woman born into a rich family became a radical communist and never relinquished her commitment to fighting fascism and trying to bring a socialist world into being. In February 1950, she chose to live in socialist East Germany rather than England. She believed that, however deeply flawed it was, East Germany was a more humane place than capitalist West Germany, where thanks to the Western Allies Nazi murderers remained in power. Such ideas of lesser-evil politics were a key characteristic of the old communist movement and this weakness led to its failure.

### Revolutionary optimism

Even as the GDR was falling apart in 1990, Ursula reaffirmed her basic belief in communist principles. "I have no reason to feel ashamed on moral or ethical grounds."

Her enemy had always been fascism, and "for that reason I hold my head up high."

Even as East Germany was about to dissolve, Agent Sonya addressed a huge rally in Berlin telling the crowd not to lose faith: "Go and become part of the Party, work in it, change the future, work as clean socialists! I have courage. I am optimistic because I know it will happen."

Learning from the victories and mistakes of the old movement, PLP fights directly for communism. We carry with us a revolutionary optimism that reminds us that however dark the current era of class struggle, we have courage because we too know communism is the future. ✪

# RED EYE ON THE NEWS . . .

### Tipping: A legacy of slavery, enforced by sexism, intensified by coronavirus

NYT, 2/9 — Tipping was a legacy of slavery,… racism and sexism…operat[ing] to keep women, especially Black women…shut out of federal protections for wage labor.…After the Civil War, white business owners, eager to find ways to continue stealing Black labor, created the idea that tips would replace wages….Restaurant corporations mutated the idea of tips from being bonuses to becoming the only source of income for Black workers ….

In 1938,Franklin Roosevelt signed the nation's first minimum wage into law, it excluded restaurant workers, a category that included a disproportionate number of Black people.

In 1966, restaurant workers were even more formally cut out with the creation of a subminimum wage for tipped workers. Today 43 states and the federal government still persist with this legacy of slavery, allowing a tipped work force that is close to 73 percent female and disproportionately Black and brown women to be paid a subminimum wage.

A nation that once enslaved Black people and declared them legally three-fifths of a person now pays many of their descendants less than a third of the minimum wage.…The subminimum wage for the tipped workers isn't simply born of a racial injustice; it continues to perpetuate both race and gender inequity today.

…The federal minimum wage for tipped workers is just $2.13 an hour.…Before the pandemic, Black women who are tipped restaurant workers earned on average nearly $5 an hour less than their white male counterparts nationwide….

With the pandemic…nearly nine in 10 Black tipped workers reported that their tips decreased by half or more.…Seventy-three percent of Black workers reported that their tips decreased because of their attempts to enforce Covid-19 safety measures.… the restaurant industry has poured millions of dollars into lobbying elected officials to preserve their exemption from having to pay their workers a fair wage, causing tens of millions of women and men to experience poverty, food insecurity, home insecurity and inequality over generations.

### Fascist D.C. rioters descended from 1920s' KKK racist attacks

NYT, 2/8 — [Current] conspiracy theories and QAnon falsehoods….in many ways resemble the culture of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s, and the group's march on Washington in 1925….Americans associate the KKK with white hoods, burning crosses and anti-Black racism but are less familiar with its white Protestant ambitions and antipathy towards Catholics and Jews….White churches today have yet to reckon with white supremacy….

White Christianity and…white supremacist Trump…are definitely not a new combination.… this stuff has been remarkably mainstream in American history….

…The attack on the Capitol [on Feb. 6]…reminds [one]...of the 1920s Klan, where they are marching in Washington in hoods and robes and carrying flags and crosses....

This was the largest order of the Klan in American history, millions of members in all 48 continental states.…Estimates are four to six million. Folks were bankers and dentists, and lawyers, pastors and politicians.…They stood for explicitly white supremacy and white Protestantism.

### U.S. unemployment rate hit 32 percent, worse than Great Depression

Shadowstats, 2/16 — Pandemic-driven unemployment soared to an April 2020 peak of about 32 percent, worse than in the Great Depression….

For the 11th straight month, the Bureau of Labor Statistics still could not count all the unemployed, and the missing reporting is exploding anew….

Recovery from the pandemic shutdown has stalled and/or is regressing.

## INTERNATIONAL WORKING WOMEN'S DAY

# ONLY COMMUNISM CAN ERADICATE SEXISM

@PLPCHALLENGE
FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Under capitalism the education system is driven by individualism, identity politics, and a fractured way of learning. Once a year during International Women's Month, students learn about women artists, scientists, politicians and millionaires. International Working Women's Day (March 8) is a holiday originally born from the working class as an anti-sexist celebration of women in the class struggle.

Yet, without communist analysis or leadership- this holiday has been reduced to celebrating our oppressors of a different gender—women who are a part of and a proponent of the ruling class and their sexist ideas.

The Black communist Angela Davis says to be radical simply means "grasping at the root" and at the root of every worker's struggle, especially a woman's struggle, is capitalism. In other words, a network of global bosses committing crimes against workers for the sake of ridiculous amounts of profit. To keep this profit flowing, capitalist-driven schools are designed to train the next generation to be obedient workers or join the ranks of militaries to fight overseas in imperialist wars. Under capitalism students will never learn what it means to be a revolutionary—it is only through confidence in the working class and struggle that our Party will grow.

One of the pillars of capitalism is the sexist ideology that family and household responsibilities are "women's work." For many women workers around the world this work is unpaid and is expected ON TOP OF the work that is required at a paying job. Women workers internationally experience the contradiction of a system that tells workers it's designed to be equal while simultaneously robbing or hiding their labor value from them. Capitalist bosses pump sexist ideology into mass media, schooling and laws to successfully isolate mothers and women caregivers from other workers and their potential to build working-class power.

This same system perpetuates the lie that women's power is attained by becoming a better capitalist, maybe a manager or boss or by voting for a woman politician who will somehow represent their collective interests.

Progressive Labor Party declares that in a fight for a world where sexism, racism and exploitation is completely SMASHED, workers need to unite—of all genders—to reject sexist and liberal ideas and resolve these contradictions through communism. A boss—regardless of gender—is still a boss. It is only as a united working-class that we will break our chains.

### A woman's place is in the class struggle

Revolutionary women grow through struggle and the contradictions that working-class women learn become sharper when they unite with other workers around the world. For example, housekeeping for hotels and business offices is one of the hardest jobs in any industry (they have more injuries than coal miners). In 2018, to demand better working conditions, thousands of housekeepers from 26 hotels throughout Chicago went on strike for a whole year! One woman worker stated that while she worked at the Hyatt Regency, out of the 200 housekeepers there, a third were Mexican, a third were Chinese, and most of the women with the highest seniority were Black. Bosses began to divide the department by race, paying the Chinese women to clean extra rooms above the cleaning quote of $5 per room. At first the Black and Mexican women were angry toward the Chinese women but instead of turning on each other, the women organized against the bosses!

"We could win a lower room quota with an hourly raise for everyone if we stayed together" (CPUSA, 3/20). The more workers fight back, the more we learn that we need all workers - Black, Latin, Asian, indigenous and white to win.

In the 1960s, women of the Young Lords, a Puerto Rican revolutionary group, sought to challenge sexist ideologies and practices within Latin American culture and demanded that their male leaders make smashing sexism a priority. Members, such as Connie Cruz and Gloria Rodriguez understood that 'machismo' (overly aggressive masculinity) was a result of capitalism and emphasized that to fight it, this capitalist system must be destroyed.

In 1917, Latin workers were ordered to accept toxic "baths" as they crossed the Mexican-American border. Inspectors attempted to pull women off of a trolley on their way to work but the brave fighters refused, knowing some of the workers were photographed nude or previously set on fire. 17-year old Carmelita Torres led the fight with other women domestic workers, demanding a refund of their trolley fare and convinced hundreds more women and men to protest the racist, sexist terror.

All of these women workers were catapulted into their revolutionary potential by making a decision to build a base and fight-back against their rotten living and working conditions. Their leadership shows that sustainable change cannot be done alone but manifests when workers organize with other workers who agree that 'enough is enough.'

### Women will lead an international communist revolution

Women workers should be communists because mainstream feminism often fails to consider class analysis and race. PLP is anti-sexist and recognizes that in our fight for communist revolution it is the most super-exploited members of our class that have the sharpest analysis and ability to lead. Women workers internationally who have fought racism, sexism, and capitalism are at the front lines of our fight, united with every member of our class.

The Progressive Labor Party is, and has always been committed to communist revolution and struggling with men and women to fight against deceitful bosses around racism, sexism and all forms of exploitation. PLP understands that sexism is one of the exploitative tools utilized by the bosses to divide men and women workers, and to justify assaults, verbal attacks or paying women less.

Organizing with all workers, especially Black and Latin women workers who see these contradictions the sharpest is paramount to smash this system that has us all in a wretched bind. The more hands we can turn into fists in favor of an international working class, the more we can work towards a society free of exploitation and terror. Fight for communism!

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